

SECTION 3: SAFETY WITH CLIENTS**PROTECT YOURSELF WITH A DISTRESS CODE SYSTEM**

An important part of ensuring that you stay safe on the job, on the road and at home is preparing some “safety nets” in advance. One such precaution is having a distress code system in place.

Establish a voice stress code, a secret word or phrase that is not commonly used but can be worked into any phone or in-person conversation for cases where you feel that you are in danger. Use this if the person you are with can overhear the conversation, but you don’t want to alarm them.

The distress code could be something as simple as “Hi, this is Jane. I’m at [address]. Could you e-mail me the red file?” You can make up your own distress code, i.e. DOG FOOD (when you don’t have a dog) or I’m going to MAYDAY Lane (and there is no Mayday Lane). It may make the most sense for everyone in your office to share a single distress code; this will be easiest to remember for everyone.

The colleague who receives your distress code will be alerted that you may be in danger. With your pre-arranged signal, they will know to call 9-1-1 on your behalf, or, after asking a few careful questions, can arrange to meet you so that you are not alone, or call you back and ask you to leave to respond to an “emergency situation.”

The distress code should be used if you are uneasy, but do not feel you are in danger. If you are in immediate danger, leave the area.

Do not hesitate to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.

Authorities agree that most rapists and thieves are looking for easy targets. Be assertive and leave a dangerous situation early, but have a distress code for times you feel uneasy. Share and practice your distress code with your office, your colleagues and your family and friends.

(Source: Washington Real Estate Safety Council)